

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-05 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
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-----023505 090313Z /12
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS:SHUM, TH

SUBJECT: PRESS QUERIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: BANGKOK 19417

1. THE FOLLOWING IS SUGGESTED PRESS GUIDANCE WHICH MAY
BE USED ON A BACKGROUND BASIS WITH INTERESTED NEWSMEN:

-- SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS IS
A FUNDAMENTAL TENET OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY.

-- WE HAVE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS EXPRESSED OUR CONCERN TO
THE RTG THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS THAT THOSE DETAINED
AS A RESULT OF THE POLICE-STUDENT CONFRONTATION ON
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OCTOBER 6, 1976, RECEIVE A FAIR, OPEN AND PROMPT TRIAL.
WE WERE ASSURED THAT NORMAL LEGAL PROCEDURES WOULD BE
FOLLOWED AND SUMMARY JUSTICE UNDER ARTICLE 21 OF THE
CONSTITUTION WOULD NOT BE EMPLOYED.

-- UNDER CURRENT THAI LAW, THOSE CHARGED WITH NATIONAL
SECURITY OFFENSES, LESE MAJESTE, AND COMMUNISM MUST BE

TRIED BY A MILITARY COURT. WHILE WE ARE CONCERNED THAT

THE ACCUSED ARE NOT ABLE TO HAVE LAWYERS PRESENT IN THE COURTROOM, WE DO NOTE THAT THEY ARE ALLOWED TO CONSULT DEFENSE LAWYERS OUTSIDE THE COURTROOM AND THAT IN THE COURTROOM THEY ARE ABLE TO SPEAK IN THEIR OWN DEFENSE.

-- THE RTG DETAINED OVER 3,000 PEOPLE AS A RESULT OF THE THAMMASAT INCIDENT. MOST WERE RELEASED AFTER A BRIEF PERIOD OF DETENTION. FORMAL CHARGES WERE BEING CONSIDERED AGAINST 110 OF THESE. IN THE END, CHARGES WERE DROPPED AGAINST ALL BUT THE 18 NOW ON TRIAL.

-- WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY INSTANCES OF TORTURE OR BY LOCAL STANDARDS OF CRUEL OR INHUMAN TREATMENT OF THESE PEOPLE.

-- WE ALSO NOTE THAT THE RTG IS PERMITTING THE PUBLIC AND PRESS TO ATTEND THE TRIAL SESSIONS. THIS IS IN ACCORD WITH OUR INTEREST IN A FAIR AND OPEN TRIAL.

2. WE AGREE WITH YOUR POINT THAT ANY INITIAL PUBLIC, ON-THE-RECORD COMMENT SHOULD COME FIRST FROM THE DEPT. THEREFORE, EMBASSY DISCUSSION WITH REPORTERS SHOULD BE ON BACKGROUND.

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3. TO DATE, WE HAVE MADE NO STATEMENTS ON THE TRIAL AND THE ISSUE OF THE DEPT'S POSITION HAS NOT ARISEN IN THE NOON BRIEFINGS OR OTHER SIMILAR FORUMS. ON SEPTEMBER 1, HOWEVER, THE DEPT SPOKESMAN ACKNOWLEDGED IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION AT THE NOON BRIEFING THAT THE EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED A LETTER ADDRESSED TO PRESIDENT CARTER FROM THE RELATIVES OF THE "THAMMASAT 18" AND HAD FORWARDED IT TO WASHINGTON FOR CONSIDERATION. IF THE QUESTION SHOULD ARISE, WHICH WE CONSIDER UNLIKELY, WE WOULD EXPECT SPOKESMAN TO RESPOND ALONG THE LINES OF PARA 1 IF EMBASSY HAS NO OBJECTION. VANCE

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